GENTLE REFLECTIONS

UPON THE

Short but Serious Reasons

FOR A

NATIONAL MILITIA.

——— Noli unquam parcere ludo;
Projice tristitias, & renovere jocis.
CORN. GALL.

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UPON THE

Short but Serious Reaſons

FOR A

National Militia.

ON Peruſal of that lively Production entitled *Short but Serious Reflections on the National Militia*, who can be but pleaſed whilſt there are every where beſides, ſo many Matters of Condolence, to find in it a juſt Handle of Congratulation to this Country, for its poſſeſſing one ſuch Choice-

Spirit, that can, in the Midſt of the greateſt Diſtreſs it has for Ages known, attempt to keep up the Heart of the Public, by addreſſing it in a Strain as mortal-merry as the Grave-diggers in *Hamlet*, throwing about their Wit amidſt grinning ſkulls, Mouldering-bones, and all the diſmal Mementos of Death and Putrefaction?

Pity it is indeed that a Piece replete with ſo much genuine Mirth, ſhould have a Kind of Ghaſtlineſs reflected upon it from the pale Complexion of the Times. But, certain it is, that if Joke and Pleaſantry could ſave a ſinking State, the Author of it would deſerve to be voted into the Miniſtry; eſpecially if one could be ſure of his employing ſo palatable a Vehicle, under the Sanction of a good Intention, to convey ſerious and wholeſome Advice.

But unluckily this witty Unreaſoner ſeems to have no Object in View, but that of Ridicule

dicule for Ridicule-ſake, or at leaſt not to uſe it ſo much towards exploding the Scheme of a Militia, as all Schemes whatever, except that of bringing all Things back to the ſame indolent nothing-meaning Way, by which they have been conducted to their preſent Paſs: Proving thereby how much eaſier it is to furniſh a good Jeſt than a good Counſel, to create a Laugh by the one, than to deſerve a ſerious Applauſe by the other.

It is alſo doubtleſs very kind, "in this "Age of Levity and Ridicule," for a Writer to throw in his Mite towards encreaſing ſuch a general Propenſity, eſpecially at a Time when the Courſe of Things threatens hard to force it, ſo much againſt the Grain, into a ſerious Turn.

One might otherwiſe naturally enough think that ſo clouded, ſo dark a Proſpect as that we have before us, required another Sort of Light, for the Guidance of our perplexed Steps, than the Ignis Fatuus of Sheer-wit,

and that the late melancholy Diſaſters which have befallen this Nation, claimed rather a more decent Treatment than jeſting upon the diſtracting Anxiety they muſt give to every True-lover of his Country; though that indeed is grown ſo unfaſhionable a Character, as to be baniſhed into the Claſſes of the Mob.

There was doubtleſs great Humor and Frolic in that gentle Prince *Nero's* ſinging to his Harp, on the Top of his Palace, the Conflagration of *Troy*, whilſt *Rome* was in Flames round him: And yet ſuch was the Sullenneſs, and want of Taſte in his Countrymen and Subjects, as not to enter into the Spirit of the Joke, or ſuffer it to prevail over their own Feelings for being burnt out of Houſe and Home.

But if this Piece of imperial Gaity was judged not to be quite harmleſs, or at leaſt rather miſ-timed, ſuch Mirth can hardly come with a better Grace from a private Perſon who ſhould wantonly make Sport with the

Calamities

Calamities of his Fellow-Subjects, and jeſt with the Public Perdition.

For to whatever Banter or Witticiſms the Eſtabliſhment itſelf of a Militia may lie open, no-one, it is to be preſumed, will deny that the Occaſion on which it was mentioned, and ſeconded by the Cry of the People, was full-ſerious, and if it was only "the "meaneſt and moſt abſurd Underſtandings "in the Kingdom," which procured its being made the Matter of a National Addreſs from almoſt every County and Borough in it, their good Intention at leaſt might have interceded for them againſt that mercileſs Edge of Ridicule, which has fallen on their Heads for it.

It does not however appear that even the Untruſtineſs of our Regular-forces, inferred from ſeveral late Actions too diſguſtful to particulariſe, was what ſuggeſted the Calling-out for a conſtitutional Militia, but rather a much higher and more affecting Motive.

When

When the *French* frowned upon us from their oppoſite Coaſt, lined with Troops that threatened us with that Sham-invaſion, with which they covered their real Deſigns upon *Minorca*; What true *Engliſhman* could, without Indignation, obſerve his Country ſo reduced from its former Power and State of Strength, as to be confeſſedly unable to protect itſelf, and forced to have a mean Recourſe for Aid to Foreign Mercenaries? Might not ſuch an one then at leaſt wiſh that ſome Method might be ſubſtituted to empower the Nation thence-forward to do without them? And what Method could be or more natural or more glorious than to put Arms into the Hands of the Natives, and to train them up to their ancient Uſe of, and Expertneſs in, them? And that not to defend them againſt "the Attacks of Judges "and Juries, againſt Writs and Ejectments, "Goals and Pillories," not to ſet up a Mob-Government, not to pull up Turnpikes, not to kill now and then a ſtraggling Hare, or

even

even to rebel againſt the hard Hand of Famine, ſo much above all Laws; but to deliver this Nation from that dangerous and ignominious Neceſſity, pleaded on every Menace of a Foreign Enemy, of mumping Succors abroad, never but dearly ſold to it, if it was to coſt no more than the Shame of an Application for them.

As this was then evidently the capital Object of the Promoters of the Militia, once more, can it be either very fair or very decent, after the Bulk of the Nation had adopted the Opinion, to treat it as the Offſpring of only "the meaneſt and moſt abſurd Underſtandings?" Is that the Language or Conception of it due to it? Even if after all, it ſhould be found to be impracticable, without a ſingle Reaſon, unleſs a Jeſt ſhould be a Reaſon, for its being impracticable, or what would be yet more malignant; unleſs a falſe Opinion of its being ſo ſhould be created by an unjudicious or deſignedly defective Plan of one.

Double-

Double-chinned Juſtices, gouty Commiſſioners of Turnpikes, broad-faced Aldermen, preſent confeſſedly a burleſque Idea, and are certainly fitter to cut a Figure at a guttling-Match, than at a Review, in Quality of Officers; but ſuch a Ridicule would vaniſh on a Subſtitution of the old conſtitutional ones, Dukes, Marquiſſes, Earls, Viſcounts, Barons, who formerly were not above heading the Militia of their Times, and who in Truth derived from ſpecifically that Duty, thoſe Titles which expreſly imply the Nature of it; Titles which their Deſcendants having long loſt Sight of their primitive Inſtitution, now drag along after them, as mere Matters of Form and Style, without any Significance remaining of the military Employs originally annexed to them. Nor would probably their Anceſtors, or at leaſt ſuch of them as had not owed their Nobility to purely Court-Favour, or to the modern Practice of purchaſing it with Money, think their Succeſſors more degenerately employed in coun-

countenancing by their Example and Aſſiſtance the Revival of an effectual Militia, than in ſharping or being ſharped at a Gaming-table, or acting the Heroes of the Turf, at a ſtupid Horſe race, at which the Betts are all the Diverſion aimed at, or galloping after a Pack of Hounds, with ſuch a Continuance of Paſſion for it, as to leave them qualified for no Company on Earth, but that of Grooms, Jockies, and Huntſmen.

Even then, a Drill in a Country Churchyard, might afford a Diverſion at leaſt as ſublime, as a Cock-pit or a Cricket-match; or indeed as moſt of thoſe Pleaſures on which ſo many young Fellows of Quality ring the Changes of Dulneſs, and loſing their Time in priviledged Worthleſſneſs, run up to Seed, rot and die, without leaving any Name but what is the Scorn of Hiſtory, or Remembrance.

Whatever then Ridicule falls upon a miſ-conſtituted Militia, glances wide of a proper one, of which too it can never be wreſted into an Argument of its Impoſſibility.

There is no one that thinks at all about it, but muſt feel at once its Neceſſity, and its being far from impoſſible, though perhaps ſomewhat difficult to reduce it into Practice. Eaſy it certainly cannot well be expected to be, to recover immediately to a whole People, that martial Turn from which it has ſo viſibly and ſo long degenerated through the Example of Superiors immers'd in Indolence, enervated by falſe Pleaſure, and engroſſed by falſe Intereſt. But it is certain too, that even that Mob, deſpicably as it is treated, and to whom, however, nothing worſe can be juſtly reproached, but its over-aptneſs to be miſled by Superiors, often intrinſically of no more Eſtimation than the loweſt of thoſe who go under that Deno-

Denomination, has yet Senſe, yet Virtue enough to prefer the following Men of Rank in any right Examples they would deſign to ſet them, than in the ruinous ones of their Follies and Vices. Moſt unjuſtly then do many of the Mock-great complain of the growing Inſolence and Uſurpation of a Freedom of Controul and Cenſure in the lower Claſſes of the People, when themſelves have been pleaſed to countenance this levelling Spirit, by becoming Mob themſelves, by renouncing every Virtue, every great and good Quality that ſhould diſtinguiſh them from it, by adopting, in ſhort, all the Meanneſſes, all the Taſtleſſneſs, all that Ignorance and Indifference to Merit and to Honor, which characteriſes what is commonly called the Mob: Which Mob too, has yet Senſe enough not to think itſelf obliged to pay any profound Reſpect, where, with a certain inſtinctive Shrewdneſs, it ſees nothing to command it, but an outſide Glare of

Titles or Wealth, under which the Owners vainly think they can conceal the greateſt of all Poverties, that of the Heart and Mind; whilſt the meaneſt born are as capable of gracing mere Gifts of Fortune as they are, or at leaſt could not make a more ignoble or deſpicable Uſe of them.

But were the leading Men of the Country, inſtead of pluming themſelves upon Titles they diſhonor, or upon Places they were never born to fill, to reſolve at length on flouncing out of the Slough of Indolence, and Worthleſſneſs in which they ſtick grovelling, and on deſerving the Appellation of Great, which they now wear, like a Paper pinned, and inſcribed with it for a Nickname; no Period of Time, could ever furniſh them with ſo glorious an Opportunity for ſuch a virtuous Exertion. Never could a juſt Ambition wiſh for a nobler Field, than the Retrieval of a declining Nation.

And

And nothing would perhaps more promote the generalizing ſuch a Spirit, than the raiſing an effectual and univerſal Militia. Their Countenance would not only facilitate even ſo arduous a Taſk, but ſalve every Objection that may be oppoſed to it. So far then would it be from ſubſcribing a Jeſt, that thoſe who ſhould attempt to turn it into one, could not eſcape a Ridicule ten times more ſtrongly retorted, but by being themſelves beneath it; whilſt ſuch an Eſtabliſhment would not only bid fair for creating one of the moſt ſerious Obſtacles that the Enemies of *Great Britain* could have to encounter in their Deſigns againſt it, but might be erected into the firmeſt Rampart of domeſtic Liberty. It might be ſo planned as to be an exhauſtleſs Seminary of valuable Recruits for our Army and Marine; Recruits of another Nature than the wretched Sweepings of our Streets by Violence,

or

or even than ſuch Volunteers as enter the Service upon no Vocation, but their ſuppoſing it a State of Idleneſs; or from their being the Refuſe of every other Way of Life, or perhaps drawn in by the Decoys of recruiting Serjeants, with their Drums, Colours, and Impreſs-Money, into a Slavery for Life, of which they have no ſooner the Senſe, than they are ready to hazard the being ſhot rather than not deſert it.

But that there never will be a Militia effectually conſtituted, is highly probable, and that for a much ſtronger Reaſon than any couched under that delicate Irony ſo much miſemployed towards creating in the Publick a Diſreliſh, a Contempt, or a Prejudice againſt the Practicability of one: And that is, there will not be one, becauſe there undoubtedly ought to be one; a Rule of Judgment which will not appear entirely a falſe one, to whoever will conſider how

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conſtantly the Courſe of Things for a long Time paſt, has given the Lie to all the Anticipations of common Senſe.

In the mean Time let thoſe enjoy the Joke, to whom it can be Matter of Joke, our being embarked in the preſent "glo-"rious War without any Allies, or any Ad-"miniſtration at all," but let them withal aſk themſelves the fair Queſtion; to whom is it that theſe Circumſtances are a Reproach? Whoſe Fault was it that no Alliances were in Time cultivated, or negociated by able Miniſters? Or, to whoſe wretched Tenor of Conduct is it owing that the Nation has loſt all Credit and Influence which could induce other Powers to league, or make a Common-cauſe with it?

If again there is no Adminiſtration exiſting, or what amounts to the ſame Thing, no Adminiſtration that is capable of doing

ing any Thing eſſential; to what is this Nullity of Power owing, but to the manifeſt Continuance of its Reality in thoſe who ſhrunk in their Heads during a late Storm, and who as ſoon as a devoted *Jonas* had been thrown to the devouring Whale, which did not however bring him alive to Land, ventured to creep again out of their Shells, and exalt their Heads? Who now noſe the preſent Adminiſtration with Reproaches of the very Impoſſibilities which themſelves have originally created, and to the Misfortune of this Country, are ſtill ſuffered to continue an Oppoſition to their ceaſing to be ſuch.

Who does not ſee that a Band of Men, who have for near Half a Century been founding a ſeparate Dominion within their own Families and Dependences, could not be but in vain driven out of the higher Spheres of Power, whilſt all the lower ones were ſtill left peſtered up with Swarms of their

Menials

Menials and Creatures, who beſides their Hopes of ſeeing their Patrons return into Office, muſt have yet a ſtronger Motive of Indiſpoſition towards the new Subſtitutes, if but for their Declaration againſt that State of Corruption out of which that Vermin was bred, and which is now ſo much their Element that they could not well live out of it?

Nothing too was ever plainer, than that the whole political Syſtem of the former Managers turned ſolely and excluſively upon Money. Our foreign Allies were habituated to demand it rather as a Tribute, than a Subſidy, which if refuſed or curtailed, they looked on it as a withdrawing ourſelves from Subjection to them, and reſented it accordingly. Domeſtic Dependents were procured by the ſame Means, and were apt to take Dudgeon at any Diſcontinuance of Bribery, with the ſame Sullenneſs of Spirit. Thus that miſerable Cuſtom, intro-

duced for want of a better Policy, became at length a Neceſſity of Government, and was managed with a Clumſineſs and Impropriety perfectly conſiſtent indeed with the Underſtandings of thoſe incapable of employing any other Expedient. In the mean Time, ſuch a conſtant Demand for Money, and Anticipations of Credit gave to the *Jews*, Stockjobbers, Remittancers, and all the uſurious Contractors, ſuch an Influence on the public Affairs, as it will be hard, if not impoſſible to ſhake off: Fond of the Power thus uſurped through the falſe Neceſſity of Recourſe to them, and too tenacious of the Advantages they find in it, they will not probably be eaſily brought to transfer to a Set of Miniſters made perhaps without aſking their gracious Leave in Form, that Confidence they had in their ancient Employers and Cuſtomers, a Confidence cheriſhed by a long Series of Dealings, and eſtabliſhed at the Expence of a Nation taxed, to make good out of its Vitals the Profits of the Bargains, that were to cement this ſerene

Alliance

Alliance between ſilly Ambition and dirty Avarice. The monied Intereſt then would not even need the Cue or Prompterſhip of their old Friends, to damp the pecuniary Operations of the new Miniſters; and thoſe might very ſafely, without incurring the Unpopularity of any direct or ouvert Acts of Oppoſition, truſt to the Indiſpoſition of the leading Money-brokers, and Ways-and-Means-Men, for their having it in their Power inſultingly to upbraid the preſent Managers with unraiſed Subſidies, unfilled Lotteries, and neglected Propoſals of Loans, on the Foot of a public Credit, already pretty much worn out by thoſe very Perſons who upbraid them.

This Phalanx then, though retreated out of the Field, but ſtill fortified by its own Number, and the powerfulleſt Connexions, joining Bucklers, may well make *Grub-ſtreet*, and even higher Places reſound with Bravades and Defiances to this, or indeed to any Adminiſtration to call them to an Ac-

count for Delinquencies, though too obvious to need an Enquiry. Alas! the preſent Members of it, ſo far from having the Power to procure the Puniſhment of the Guilty, had not even enough to ſave the Innocent from being ſacrificed to them. And, in Truth, the Wonder is not that they ſhould grow heartily ſick of ſeeing thoſe Ills continue, they might have foreſeen they could not cure, unleſs they were allowed to uſe more efficacious Remedies, but that they would accept at all; or upon any Conſiderations, ſo ungracious an Office, without making ſure of the only Condition beforehand, which could give Succeſs to their Diſcharge of it. And of this they may be ſure, that none will be forwarder to blame them for any Failure, than thoſe very Perſons who ſhall have cauſed it, by ſecretly or openly embarraſſing their Operations, or by weakening their Credit, Power and Influence: And in ſuch a Cenſure, however undeſerved, they will be ſure to be ſeconded by all thoſe ſuperficial Judges, whoſe Deciſions

are

are governed by Events, without Examination of Circumſtances, and by thoſe naturally malignant Tempers, to whom the unjuſteſt Accuſations is ever welcomer than the cleareſt Defence: And unhappily theſe two Claſſes are not compoſed of the ſmalleſt Number of Mankind.

FINIS.

F I N I S.